



Subject:	Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service update
Date:	8 November 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the new Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) – the regional initiative to support business start-up and growth that will be led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 councils.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the update on the Northern Ireland Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS). Note the planned go-live date for the new intervention and launch.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At the 17 February meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, Members agreed that Belfast City Council should lead on the submission of the application to UKSPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) for the 11-council Enterprise Support Service (ESS) model. They also agreed that the council should lead on the future development and delivery of the service, subject to additional due diligence and risk management work being undertaken.
3.2	A further update was presented to the August 2023 meeting of this Committee, providing additional detail on progress to date on the procurement process and the funding drawdown and identifying an emerging risk due to delays in issuing the funding agreement/MoU by DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities). In early September 2023, officers received the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) setting out the terms and conditions of the funding offer and this was signed by the Chief Executive.
3.3	Having received the MoU, officers were able to proceed with the appointment of the contractors for the delivery of services to businesses, as well as the provision of support services such as marketing and communications and call handling. Following completion of the procurement process, successful contractors include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage and Foundation – Enterprise NI and Partners Growth and Scaling – DCSDC and CCGBC – Deirdre Fitzpatrick and Associates Growth and Scaling – BCC – Full Circle Management Solutions Growth and Scaling – FODC, MUDC and ABCBC – Full Circle MS Growth and Scaling – ANDBC, LCCC and NMD – Full Circle MS Growth and Scaling – ANBC and MEABC – Mallusk Enterprise Park Telehandling – Like Us NE Communications and Marketing – Ardmore
3.4	Following mobilisation of contracts across a number of work strands it is expected that the go live date for service delivery will take place in early November. Given delays in issuing the

	<p>MoU, officers are working with contractors to identify how we can maximise the delivery of the service while acknowledging that not all support services and resources are yet fully functional.</p>
3.5	<p>As part of the mobilisation period work has been undertaken to develop new brand for the new service. The scoping exercise consisted of detailed surveys, focus groups and stakeholder workshops which led to the creation of a new brand/logo, 4 sub brands and brand guidelines. A copy is attached for reference.</p>
3.6	<p>The selected brand Proposition is outlined as follows; ‘Go Succeed NI Business Support is a service to help potential entrepreneurs, new starts and existing businesses to maximise their potential and contribute to Northern Ireland’s economy. It provides would-be and existing businesses with flexible, tailored and easily accessible advice and support at any stage of their growth journey.’</p>
3.7	<p>The brand Value is that Go Succeed is the go-to source of easily accessible advice and support for anyone starting or growing their business in NI.</p>
3.8	<p>To accommodate marketing messages aimed at the widest possible range of businesses, and to allow for promotion of the specific support offerings applicable to each level, a set of Go Succeed sub-brands have been created.</p>
3.9	<p>The formal launch of the brand and the new service is scheduled to take place on the 13 November in Belfast City Hall to mark the start of Global Entrepreneurship week.</p>
3.10	<p>The launch event will be hosted by Sarah Travers and will include a welcome and overview of the new service from John Walsh (TBC) representing Belfast City Council as the service lead. The launch will also include a panel discussion from entrepreneurs and business owners across the region who discuss business support provision and how they have accessed council led services and others to achieve their business growth ambitions. The event will be attended by representatives from DLUHC, the other 10 councils, key stakeholders and delivery partners and key media partners.</p>
3.11	<p>As part of the funding application to DLUHC, resources were secured for a number of staff roles in order to support programme delivery and provide appropriate management and oversight for funders and all council partners. Recruitment for these roles took place in October and have now concluded, however due to some of the exercises being unsuccessful and the creation of additional posts for finance and compliance positions, a further exercise</p>

	will now take place in November 2023 and staff should be in position for December 2023 (subject to notice periods).
3.12	In the interim, the development and mobilisation work is being led by existing resources within the Enterprise and Business Growth Team. The team has been supported by colleagues from across the council including Digital Services, Procurement, Finance, Legal Services, Information Governance Unit, Human Resources and Continuous Improvement and Audit, Governance and Risk.
3.13	As a recap, the service is being funded through the new Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This is the DLUHC fund that was established as a replacement for EU funding (ERDF and ESF). One strand of funding focused on “Supporting Local Business”. The Investment Plan for UKSPF in Northern Ireland was launched in December 2022. At that time, the Plan proposed that a central component of the Supporting Local Business strand would be the 11 council Enterprise Support Service. An indicative financial allocation of £17million - £12million programme delivery and £5million for small grants – was set aside for the service. UKSPF funding is available to March 2025 so the initial programme period will run from Autumn 2023 to March 2025.
3.14	The new service represents the ambition of all local authorities to deliver on our statutory responsibility around business start-up in a way that will make a real change over time, by working to address cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship and helping more businesses to start, grow and scale across the region. It can directly support our Belfast Agenda targets for job creation and economic growth and can also provide an important engagement mechanism to enhance business interaction with key investments, including those supported through City Deal.
3.15	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council will act as the lead council on behalf of the 11 councils for delivery of the service. To do so, we will establish a delivery and management team which will be fully resourced through the DLUHC funding.</p> <p>The overall indicative SPF budget is in the region of £5million revenue in year 1 and £7million revenue in year 2, with around £5million available across the funding period for grant support.</p>
3.16	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>

	An equality impact and rural needs assessment for the service has been completed. Local targets for delivery in each council area have been established and will be part of the contractual commitments with delivery partners.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None